

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1623

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 2111

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NO OVIP, (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJ: SECVISIT: BIOGRAPHIC: PRIME MINISTER ODVAR NORDLI

1. ON 9 JANUARY 1976 PRIME MINISTER TRYGVE BRATTELI RESIGNED IN FAVOR OF HIS DESIGNATED SUCCESSOR, ODVAR NORDLI (PRONOUNCED NORDLEE). THE CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP WAS AN ATTEMPT TO INCREASE THE ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR THE LABOR PARTY BEFORE THE 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. NORDLI HAS A PUBLIC MANNER THAT IS SLOW AND SHY. HE THUS FITS THE NATIONAL STEREOTYPE AND AROUSES CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY AND VOTER IDENTIFICATION, ESPECIALLY IN SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS. HE IS OPEN, GENIAL, TOLERANT AND SELF-EFFACING; HE IS ALSO A TOUGH AND EFFECTIVE POLITICIAN AND A DEFT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATER.

2. A MODERATE LABORITE, NORDLI HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL LEADERS OF THE NORWEGIAN LABOR ORGANIZATION AND OF THE MODERATES IN HIS PARTY. NORDLI HAS INDICATED THAT HE IS WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH THE CENTER OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, ESPECIALLY WITH THE "MIDDLE" PARTIES--THE CENTER AND CHRISTIAN PEOPLE'S PARTIES. HE HAS TO SOME EXTENT GAINED THE CONFIDENCE OF HIS ADVERSARIES IN THE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES AS MUCH AS ANY LABOR POLITICIAN COULD WITHOUT ABANDONING HIS PARTY'S PLATFORM AND PRINCIPLES.

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3. ODVAR NORDLI WAS BORN ON 3 NOVEMBER 1927, IN STANGE, HEDMARK COUNTRY. HIS FATHER WAS A MECHANIC ON THE NORWEGIAN STATE RAILWAYS. AT 21, NORDLI BEGAN WORK AS AN AUDITOR. HE BEGAN HIS POLITICAL CAREER IN

1951. NORDLI IS EXPERIENCED IN MANY SECTORS OF PUBLIC LIFE AND HAS SERVED IN THE PARLIAMENT FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS. HE SERVED AS MINISTER OF LABOR AND MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS IN THE FIRST BRATTELI GOVERNMENT(1971-72) AND BECAME CHAIRMAN OF THE LABOR PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP IN 1973. IN ADDITION, HE WAS NAMED CHAIRMAN OF THE NORWEGIAN DEFENSE REVIEW COMMISSION WHEN IT WAS FOUNDED IN MAY 1974. (HE RESIGNED BOTH THOSE POSTS ON BECOMING PRIME MINISTER)

4. IN HIS FIRST FOUR MONTHS AS PRIME MINISTER HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE PLANS MAINTAIN THE LINES OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY ESTABLISHED BY PRECEEDING LABOR GOVERNMENTS AND THAT HE INTENDS TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE LEADERSHIP ROLE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. CHARACTER-ISTIC OF HIS MODERATE APPROACH HE OFFERED TO COOPERATE WITH THE MIDDLE NON-SOCIALIST PARTIES. HIS FIRST MONTHS HAVE BEEN FAVORED BY SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF A TWO-YEAR NATIONAL WAGE AND PRICE AGREEMENT; IT HAS BEEN MARRED BY SERIOUS INTERNAL PARTY DIFFICULTIES OVER THE QUESTION OF OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING IN THE NORTH.

5. NORDLI IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO COOPERATION--INTERNAIONAL ATLANTIC, EUROPEAN AND NORDIC. A LONG-TIME SUPPORTER OF NATO, HE IS CONVINCED THAT NATO DEFENSE COOPERATION IS VITAL TO NORWAY'S SECURITY. HE SPOKE FORCEFULLY RECENTLY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF KEFLAVIK TO NORWAY'S SECURITY. HE ALSO WAS A STRONG PROPONENT OF NORWEGIAN EC MEMBERSHIP. HE BELIEVES IN THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST IDEALS OF UNIVERSAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY REALIZED THROUGH THE WELFARE STATE. HE IS ABOVE ALL A REALIST-A PRAGMATIST AND POLITICAL COM-PROMISER, AVODIING BLIND APPLICATION OF DOCTRINAIRE SOLUTIONS AND ADAPTING TO THE NEW MIDDLE CLASS VALUES OF NORWAY'S WORKING CLASS MAJORITY. HE JOINS WITH A SIMILARY PRAGMATIC TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP IN ADVOCATING CONFIDENTIAL

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A MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD, HALF-AND-HALF APPROACH. THIS APPROACH MODERATES THE PACE OF SOCIAL REFORM AND RESTRAINS INCREASES IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IN ORDER TO PROVIDE TAX RELIEF AND PERMIT GRADUAL INCREASES IN PRIVATE CONSUMPTION; IT TRIES TO ENSURE THAT GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS AIMED AT ACHIEVING EQUALITY, JUSTICE AND REGIONAL BALANCE WILL NOT COMPLICATE EXISTING REGULATIONS AND INCREASE RED TAPE; AND IT BALANCES PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AGAINST THE PROMOTION OF CONTINUED, ALBEIT MODERATE, ECONOMIC GROWTH.

6. NORDLI HAS A SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF US DOMESTIC AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN POLICY AND IS OPEN AND

FRIENDLY WITH AMERICANS. IN 1969 HE VISITED THE US WITH A PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION. AS MINISTER OF LABOR AND MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS, HE ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE ON CITIES THAT WAS HELD BY THE NATO COMMITTEE ON THE CHALLENGE OF MODERN SOCIETY IN MAY 1971. IN APRIL 1973 HE TOOK PART IN A US-SPONSORED TOUR OF NATO HEADQUARTERS AND INSTALLATIONS IN BELGIUM AND ITALY.

7. NORDLI IS GOOD NATURED AND SPORTSMANLIKE. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH IS GOOD, ALTHOUGH HE IS A LITTLE STIFF IN SPEAKING IT AND MAKES SOME MISTAKES. NORDLI IS MARRIED TO MARIT HARASETH. THEY HAVE TWO CHILDREN. BREMER

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